

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Covid Recovery – Feedback on Start of School Year and Summer Offer</b>
Meeting date	23 November 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Summer Offer looked to address mental health, gaps in learning, the lack of preparation for secondary school, exploitation and knife crime as well as ensuring that families have food during this period. This report details the impact of this offer on the start of the school year for children in BCP.
Recommendations	<b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b>  <b>Members note the impact of the Summer Offer.</b>
Reason for recommendations	Request by the committee

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Nicola Greene, Portfolio Holder for Covid Resilience, Schools and Skills
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Update

## Background

1. As part of the Covid Recovery Plan several offers were available over the summer holidays to support all children and young people but in particular, those that are considered vulnerable.
2. BCP's 'Summer Offer' consisted of the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, Summer School provision, supermarket vouchers for children eligible for Free School Meals and training and support from the seasonal response team.

## Holiday Activities and Food Programme

3. The HAF programme was funded by the DfE to make free places available to children aged 5 years to 16 years, eligible for and in receipt of free school meals (FSMs). The programme provides funding for Local Authorities nationally to deliver the equivalent of approximately four hours a day, four days a week, during one week at Easter, four weeks in the summer holidays and one week at Christmas, during 2021 only. Each place had to include a meal which adhered to the schools' food standards and all activities had to comply with relevant requirements as appropriate such as health and safety, safeguarding, Ofsted registration etc.
4. There was no expectation nationally to reach all children on benefits related FSMs. In BCP, a total of 3,189 children took part and 28,359 meals were delivered over the six-week summer holiday.
5. Overall, of the 8,709 FSM eligible children in BCP, 39% had engaged with the summer HAF programme, a significant increase from the 16% reported at Easter.
6. Other vulnerable families were supported as permission was sought and agreed to spend a maximum of 15% of the grant allocation on non-FSM children. This reached children falling outside of FSM criteria but still deemed vulnerable by BCP Council.
7. Using the following priority list providers were able to reach a further 213 children and young people:
  - Children on benefits-related FSMs who are Looked After Children (LAC), have additional needs, are home educated or are a young carer.
  - Children on benefits-related FSMs.

- Children not on benefits-related FSMs who are LAC, have an additional need, are home educated or are a young carer.
8. The main HAF programme funding was also supplemented by a contribution of £100,000 from Public Health Dorset from the Covid Outbreak Management Funding (COMF). This funding was used to support both Early Years and HAF providers to offer places for children transitioning to school in September 2021 (4-year-olds who are otherwise excluded from accessing the HAF grant which targets 5 to 16-year-olds).
  9. The funding from the DfE was close to £1 million. A total of £619,338 was spent on the HAF programme for the summer period and £312,035 remains for the development of places for Christmas delivery.

### **Summer Schools**

10. The DfE offered funding to secondary schools to deliver academic education and enrichment activities over the summer. Schools were free to determine which pupils they would offer provision to, however, that most focused this provision primarily on pupils making the transition into Year 7. This transition is known to be a challenging one for some pupils, and the impacts of the pandemic have increased this challenge.
11. Nine schools in BCP offered summer school provision: Highcliffe School, Magna Academy, Glenmoor and Winton Academies, The Cornerstone Academy, The Grange School, Poole High, Linwood School, Winchelsea, Avonbourne Boys' and Girls' Academy.
12. Five of these schools reported their final numbers of student attending sessions: 870 students in total with over 25% considered as vulnerable.
13. Schools reported that the main impact of these summer school sessions were:
  - The students that attended were better prepared for their transition to their new year group
  - The students that attended made new friendships
  - The students that attended were better supported with their mental health.
14. Schools reported additional impact of these summer school sessions were:
  - The students that attended benefitted from having structured activities in place over the summer
  - The students that attended have settled into their new classes more quickly
  - The students that attended caught up on some lost learning

### **Supermarket Vouchers**

15. £1,005,484.78 was allocated to BCP Council from The Covid Local Support Grant. The conditions of the grant were that at least 80% must be spent on households with children. Up to 20% could be spend on households without children and single individuals. The allocation for the summer holiday month was not been as generous as previous iterations, falling short by £500k.

16. Funding was allocated for supermarket vouchers for all children who were eligible for FSM and other vulnerable children identified by schools. Given the reduced grant allocation the value of the voucher was £12.50 per week per child. Vouchers were issued by schools.
17. The remaining grant allocation was shared between younger children for food vouchers, and with the community via the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) for households with and without children experiencing hardship due to the pandemic, principally providing support with food and utility bills. The Family Information Service issued 953 £75 vouchers (equivalent to £12.50 per week for six weeks) to pre-school aged children. The value of the grants issued for food and energy over the summer period by the CAB was £29,842.

### **Seasonal Response Training and Support**

18. As part of BCP's summer resilience plans, £100,000 was agreed to support prevention and education of our young people around county lines and exploitation. County Lines has been an increasing trend in many seaside resorts and unfortunately, the inclusion of young people in these practices has also increased.
19. The TSA Project, a charity run by an ex-county lines nominal that looks to warn young people of the risks associated with carrying knives and exploitation, visited 12 secondary schools before the summer holidays. These visits raised awareness of exploitation and the dangers of knives.
20. The charity also delivered practitioner training for front line staff to support staff knowledge and engagement.
21. Anecdotal evidence from the Seasonal Response Team reported that the joint working between the charity, the police and the team saw a successful reduction in anti-social behaviour in key areas, particularly in the Lower Gardens.

### **Summary of financial implications**

22. All schemes supporting covid recovery mentioned in this report were either ringfenced grant funded or from the authority's COMF/tranche 5 covid funding. No scheme had a direct cost to the authority's general fund.

### **Summary of legal implications**

23. None

### **Summary of human resources implications**

24. None

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

25. None

### **Summary of public health implications**

26. The Summer Offer looked to improve mental health and wellbeing for vulnerable children and young people in BCP.

### **Summary of equality implications**

27. None

**Summary of risk assessment**

28. None

**Background papers**

None

**Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.